

The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

An Old Quaker Burial Ground

In the quiet glen, nestled among the oak, sycamore, and orchard trees, stood the Old Quaker Burial Ground. Its quaint old house, with its rugged corners and chimney, exuded a rustic charm that blended seamlessly with the natural beauty of the surroundings. The simplicity and unadorned nature of the building made it a perfect meeting place for the meek in spirit. Isolated from the hustle and bustle of the outside world, this serene spot was where the followers of George Fox gathered to worship. With unwavering faith and in accordance with their own consciences, they sought to connect with God in spirit and truth. The Quaker burial ground, known as "God's acre," lay opposite the old house, demarcated by a low wall on the north and east, while a deep ditch and magnificent trees formed natural boundaries on the west and south. Several gravestones, lacking inscriptions, dotted the sacred ground, silently marking the resting places of those who had passed on.

Among the gravestones, one stood near the wall, bearing a poignant inscription: "Here lyeth the body of Elizabeth, the wife of John Vipont, 1681." The name Vipont was unfamiliar to the locals, although it was said that a few Viponts still resided in the nearby vicinity of Colne. Elizabeth's presence here reminded visitors of the long history that had unfolded within these peaceful grounds.

The view from the Quaker burial ground was nothing short of breathtaking. Catlow Water, a picturesque stream, meandered gracefully through the wooded valley, eventually merging with Pendle Water. The "Forest," adorned with charming farmsteads, painted a quintessentially English scene, backed by the imposing figure of Pendle Hill. It was a sight that truly captured the essence of tranquility and beauty.

As visitors contemplated the scene, they couldn't help but feel the weight of the words engraved in their minds. "The poor man's grave; this is the spot where rests his weary clay," they whispered. Here, in this humble place, those who had known hardship and toil found solace in eternal slumber. Yet, unlike grand gravestones that adorned other cemeteries, no towering memorials or intricate sculptures adorned these graves. The absence of ostentation was a testament to the Quaker belief in simplicity and equality. No weeping willows swayed overhead, and no faint memorial, no matter how faint, sought to distinguish the poor man's grave.

The Old Quaker Burial Ground stood as a testament to a community that valued inner spirituality over outward showmanship. It was a place where the meek and humble found solace, where the beauty of nature and the peace of a simple life intertwined harmoniously. In this lovely resting place, the spirits of the silent dead seemed to whisper their stories, reminding all who visited of the power and enduring beauty of a life lived with integrity and grace.

The poor man's grave; this is the spot
Where rests his weary clay;
And yet no gravestones lifts its head
To say what gravestones say.
No sculptured emb ems blazon here,
No weeping willows wave,
No faint memorial, e'er so faint,
Points out the poor man's grave.

By Donald Jay.